Claims

[c1] 1. A piece for a puzzle, a plurality of which may be used to solve the puzzle, the puzzle piece comprising:
an elongated member having a longitudinal axis, a first surface and an opposite second surface;
a plurality of symbols longitudinally spaced along the first surface or the second surface;
engaging means disposed on at least one of the first and second surfaces, the engaging means associated with at least one of the symbols.

[c2] 2. A puzzle piece as recited in claim 1, wherein the symbols are equally spaced along the surface.

[c3] 3. A puzzle piece as recited in claim 1, wherein a plurality of engaging means are longitudinally spaced along at least one of the first and second surfaces.

[c4] 4. A puzzle piece as recited in claim 3, wherein the engaging means on one side of the piece are associated only with non-consecutive symbols.

[c5] 5. A puzzle piece as recited in claim 1, wherein the symbols are letters of an alphabet.

[c6]   6. A puzzle piece as recited in claim 5, wherein the letters spell a word.

[c7]   7. A puzzle piece as recited in claim 1, wherein the elongated member is a rectilinear solid.

[c8]   8. A puzzle piece as recited in claim 7, wherein the engaging means is a notch.

[c9]   9. A puzzle piece as recited in claim 8, wherein the solid has a height and the notch has a depth equal to at least one-half the height.

[c10]   10. A puzzle piece as recited in claim 1, wherein the number of symbols is odd.

[c11]   11. A puzzle piece as recited in claim 1, wherein the number of symbols is even.

[c12]   12. A puzzle piece as recited in claim 1, wherein a blank portion between symbols on the surface is a symbol.

[c13]   13. A puzzle piece as recited in claim 8, wherein a notch associated with a symbol at either end of the piece is spaced from the respective end of the puzzle piece.

[c14]   14. A puzzle piece as recited in claim 8, wherein the first surface has a first notch associated with a symbol adjacent to a first end of the piece and has a notch associ-

ated with every fourth symbol thereafter in a direction toward the second end, and the second surface has a first notch adjacent to the first end of the piece and associated with a symbol which is two symbols closer to the second end of the piece than a symbol on the second surface opposite the symbol associated with the first notch on the first surface, and the second surface having a notch associated with every fourth symbol after the first notch on the second surface in a direction toward the second end.

[c15]   15. A puzzle, comprising:
a plurality of pieces, each piece comprising
an elongated member having a longitudinal axis, a first surface and an opposite second surface,
a plurality of symbols longitudinally spaced along the first surface or the second surface, and
engaging means disposed on at least one of the first and second surfaces, the engaging means associated with at least one of the symbols,
wherein the pieces connect to one another at the engaging means associated with symbols which share a common characteristic.

[c16]   16. A puzzle as recited in claim 15, wherein the engaging means associated with identical symbols on two separate pieces connect.

[c17] 17. A puzzle recited in claim 15, further comprising a main puzzle piece which has a characteristic represented by the symbols that is common to all of the puzzle pieces, and to which all of the pieces of the puzzle may connect if any of the symbols associated with the engaging means on any of the pieces and the main piece also share a common characteristic.

[c18] 18. A computer program product including a computer program operable to render a piece for a puzzle, the piece being able to be manipulated through use of an input device to solve the puzzle, the computer program comprising:

instructions for rendering an elongated member having a longitudinal axis, a first surface and an opposite second surface;

instructions for rendering a plurality of symbols longitudinally spaced along the first surface or the second surface;

instructions for rendering engaging means disposed on at least one of the first and second surfaces, the engaging means associated with at least one of the symbols.

[c19] 19. A computer program product as recited in claim 18, wherein the symbols are equally spaced along the first and second surfaces.

[c20] 20. A computer program product as recited in claim 18, further comprising instructions for rendering a plurality of engaging means which are longitudinally spaced along at least one of the first and second surfaces.

[c21] 21. A computer program product as recited in claim 20, wherein the engaging means on one side of the piece are associated only with non-consecutive symbols.

[c22] 22. A computer program product as recited in claim 19, wherein the symbols are letters of an alphabet.

[c23] 23. A computer program product as recited in claim 22, wherein the letters spell a word.

[c24] 24. A computer program product as recited in claim 18, wherein the elongated member is a rectilinear solid.

[c25] 25. A computer program product as recited in claim 24, wherein the engaging means is a notch.

[c26] 26. A computer program product as recited in claim 25, wherein the solid has a height and the notch has a depth equal to at least one-half of the height.

[c27] 27. A computer program product as recited in claim 18, wherein the number of symbols is odd.

[c28] 28. A computer program product as recited in claim 18,

wherein the number of symbols is even.

[c29] 29. A computer program product as recited in claim 18, wherein a blank portion between symbols on the surface is a symbol.

[c30] 30. A computer program product as recited in claim 25, wherein a notch associated with a symbol at either end of the piece is spaced from the respective end of the puzzle piece.

[c31] 31. A computer program product as recited in claim 25, wherein the first surface has a first notch associated with a symbol adjacent to a first end of the piece and has a notch associated with every fourth symbol thereafter in a direction toward the second end, and the second surface has a first notch adjacent to the first end of the piece and associated with a symbol which is two symbols closer to the second end of the piece than a symbol on the second surface opposite the symbol associated with the first notch on the first surface, and the second surface having a notch associated with every fourth symbol after the first notch on the second surface in a direction toward the second end.

[c32] 32. A computer program product including a computer program operable to render a puzzle, the computer pro-

gram comprising:

instructions for rendering a plurality of pieces, each piece comprising

an elongated member having a longitudinal axis, a first surface and an opposite second surface,

a plurality of symbols longitudinally spaced along the first surface or the second surface, and

engaging means disposed on at least one of the first and second surfaces, the engaging means associated with at least one of the symbols,

wherein the pieces connect, in response to user input, to one another at the engaging means associated with symbols which share a common characteristic.

[c33]   33. A computer program product as recited in claim 32, wherein the engaging means associated with identical symbols on two separate pieces connect.

[c34]   34. A computer program product as recited in claim 32, wherein the computer program further comprises in-structions for rendering a main puzzle piece which has a characteristic represented by the symbols that is com-mon to all of the puzzle pieces, and to which all of the pieces of the puzzle may connect if any of the symbols associated with the engaging means on any of the pieces and the main piece also share a common characteristic.